



## Health and Human Services **MEDIA RELEASE**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 2, 2017

### **Don't let the flu catch you by surprise**

SARASOTA, FL — The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) reminds people to get your annual flu vaccine so the flu does not catch you by surprise. Many communities have been hit hard with the flu, and health officials issue these words of caution - flu activity is expected to peak in the next few weeks so now is the time to get a flu vaccine if you have not gotten one this flu season.

The flu is more than “just a cold” for many people. The seasonal flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by viruses. It spreads from person to person. It can result in a serious illness that means lost work time or severe symptoms that require hospitalizations. In some cases, it can lead to death. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate flu and pneumonia kill about 55,000 Americans each year.

Flu season generally begins in the fall and winter. In Florida, the season is at its worst in the first months of the year. Since the flu vaccine takes about two weeks to provide protection, it is a good idea to get it now especially if you are exposed to many people in close settings.

When someone with the flu coughs or sneezes near you, you are exposed to the virus. Touching surfaces or items with the virus on them and then touching your mouth, eyes or nose can also spread the flu. Washing your hands often with soap and water plus a flu vaccine each year is your best protection. Covering your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough prevents the spread of the virus when you are sick. Coughing or sneezing into your elbow keeps the virus away from your hands.

The flu vaccine is recommended for anyone older than six months of age. It is especially important for adults older than 65, children younger than two, people with chronic diseases, pregnant women and anyone who spends time with infants too young for the vaccine. There is a high-dose version of the flu vaccine just for seniors and a cell-based vaccine as an alternative to the traditional vaccine for those with severe egg allergies.

Don't let the flu spoil your plans or cause you to miss work. **For more information about flu and where to get a flu vaccine**, visit [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org) or Find a Flu Shot Locator: [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov). You can also call the DOH-Sarasota Flu Info Line: 941-861-2800.

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#### **MEDIA NOTES:**

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## **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health, please visit [www.FloridaHealth.gov](http://www.FloridaHealth.gov).

Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities.  
View the complete policy at [www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx)

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